Introducing the 2022 Project TARA tools to support responsible research assessment

25 October 2022

Project TARA is supported by a generous three-year grant from Arcadia, a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin.
Code of Conduct

DORA is a community with shared aspirations to improve academic assessment, and we are all working towards the same goal.

✓ Participants are expected to follow the Community Conduct Rules of DORA’s administrative entity, the American Society for Cell Biology
✓ Keep comments constructive, collegial, and to the point
✓ Be respectful of everyone on the call
✓ Use the chat to contribute to the discussion
✓ The first portion of this meeting will be recorded to be shared on DORA’s site
Agenda

• Introduction
• Introducing two tools for responsible research assessment
  – Strategies on how to debias committees and deliberative processes.
  – Ideas on how to incorporate a wider range of contributions in evaluation policies and practices.
• Q&A about 2022 tools
• Introducing 2023 toolkit ideas
• Community discussion on 2023 tools
• Closing remarks and next steps
Tools to Advance Research Assessment (TARA) is a project to facilitate the development of new policies and practices for academic career assessment.

www.sfdora.org/project-tara/
Core Project TARA Team

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Project TARA consists of three main components:

- An interactive online dashboard
- A survey of U.S. academic institutions
- A toolkit of resources
Update on survey and dashboard development

Dashboard

• 2021 - 2022: Scoping events and data collection
• 2022 - 2023: Web development
• Spring 2023: Public release

Survey

• 2021 - 2022: Survey development and distribution
  – Thank you to all community members who participated in the survey!
  – Ongoing: Community Interviews with U.S. academic staff who have experience with evaluation policies and practices
• 2023: Results to be shared
1. Debiasing committee composition and deliberative processes

2. Building blocks for impact
Tool creation process

- Synthesized/prioritized issues from DORA community conversations (urgency, interest, TARA “fit”)
- Developed initial drafts of tools
- TARA tools are a work in progress that incorporate needs and feedback from the community
- Internal and external review, incorporated feedback
- Shared with larger community (today)
- Developed initial drafts of tools
Debiasing Committee Composition and Deliberative Processes

Motivation and purpose:
Even well-meaning deliberative bodies and decision-making panels tasked with making judgments about promotion, tenure, grants, and hiring can be biased, and tend to reinforce existing power dynamics.

Being more deliberate and thoughtful about how committees are constructed and the rules by which they operate can reduce the likelihood of biased outcomes.
Content overview:

Strategies and principles to create more diverse composition

Common traps to avoid

Suggestions for taking the long view (e.g. providing ECR exposure to downstream processes)
Debiasing deliberative processes can also reduce “business as usual” decision-making tendencies

Reducing **leadership bias**
- **Conduct and document “pre-briefs.”** Spending time upfront to collectively craft the “rules of the road” for committee work can create alignment and serve as a shared touchpoint that everyone—no matter what their role of seniority—can point to if things go awry.
- **Make all votes count.** Seeing how others are voting can sway where we put our own chips. Techniques like anonymous voting can help reduce tendencies to conform to others’ views or confirm safe choices rather than express true preferences.

Reducing **individual bias**
- **Question what we think we know.** Asking committee members to explicitly step through their thought processes and assumptions can surface and counteract “confirmation bias,” or the tendency to prioritize data that reinforces existing preconceptions.
- **Even the playing field.** Consider strategies to reduce advantages of circumstance; providing interview questions in advance can equalize candidates, and using relative measures—such as progress from a starting point rather than judging absolute accomplishments—can gauge applicant quality more fairly.

Increasing **systems thinking**
- **Identify bias at a system level.** Efforts to reduce personal bias can put the burden on individuals to change, and can ignore how systems themselves are often designed to reinforce “hidden in plain sight” biases.
- **Think downstream.** Improving diversity through hiring will fall flat without equal investment in mentorship and retention.
- **Use structure to provide consistency.** Structured approaches—like interview protocols and pre-determined criteria—can increase confidence in comparison without resorting to solely quantitative measures.
Building Blocks for Impact

Motivation and purpose:
Traditional measures of scholarly impact like citations and grants tend to represent a very narrow view of impact that downplays or neglects interdisciplinary work, non-traditional measures, and real-world outcomes.

This tool introduces a framework and set of impact characteristics that expand on current conventions, allowing individuals and institutions to represent a wider array and scaled set of of scholarly contributions.
Two dimensions to illustrate “impact”

Broadening the definition of scholarly “impact” against two dimensions—the scale of contributions’ influence and new types of audiences—can help institutions recognize and reward a wider variety of academic achievements and outcomes.

Scale of influence

- Scale of magnitude resulting in significant reach, scope, or stature
- Collaborative and advisory roles through partnerships and shepherding others’ work
- Direct contributions through deep disciplinary expertise

Nature of the audience

- Disciplinary or field-specific audiences
- Institutions or broader academic settings
- Contexts external to academia

General examples of the kinds of activities falling within each cell

Exemplar and illustrative instances
Examples of archetypal and/or aspirational personas or clusters of characteristics; full coverage is not necessarily the goal

Not prescriptive; examples of how excellence might take different forms

Potential to represent varying expectations for ECR v. senior scholars
Questions about 2022 tools

• **Where are these available?** On the DORA website under Resources and at Zenodo

• **Will there be more opportunities to give feedback or ask questions?** Comments/questions and examples or use cases can submitted through the DORA website or emailing info@sfdora.org

• What can we clarify about the tools’ intent and design?

• How can DORA best support their use in your work or institution?
Proposed tools and extensions for 2023

Expanding on ‘impact’
- Gathering cases and examples of impact “in action”
- Practical strategies for adoption
- Visual frameworks for specific content (a la CRediT)

End-to-end careers
- Recognizing needs of different career stages
- ‘Hidden curriculum’ insights
- Transitions in or out of academia (i.e. skill translation)
Structured discussion on the 2023 proposed tools

• What specific aspects of these topics would you find most important or useful for us to focus on to address research assessment challenges?

• Who would be the best audiences for these proposed tools?
  – Example: Faculty, Hiring committees, etc.

• How might you use the proposed tools in your own context?
  – Example: Advocacy, guidance to create new policies or practices, etc.
Upcoming work

● Dashboard user testing
  ○ Sign up for emails at https://sfdora.org/ (bottom right of the page) for future updates

● Share your story!
  ○ Email info@sfdora.org to let us know how you use these tools and to share outputs from their use!
  ○ #DORAInAction #ProjectTARA
  ○ Follow & tag us @DORAssessment

● Blog summary and recording to be posted
Stay up to date and in touch!

- Project TARA webpage: sfdora.org/project-tara/